

Sunday, December 4, 2022—Galatians 2:8-10 The Outcome of the Jerusalem Council

### **Galatians 2:8**

- **(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)**
- The same God that made Peter an apostle and sent him out with a commission to minister to Israel, sent Paul to minister to the Gentiles. Christ was the source of Paul’s gospel; he did not learn it from any man.

### **Galatians 2:9**

- **And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.**
- The use of the term “right hands” is important. The Greek word is used to refer to direction, or the right side of the human body. Metaphorically, it means a place of honor or authority.
  - Matthew 20:21, 22:44, 25:33-34
- The word translated “fellowship” in this verse carries the following meanings:
  - fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation
  - the share which one has in anything, participation
  - intercourse, fellowship, intimacy
  - the right hand as a sign and pledge of fellowship (in fulfilling the apostolic office).
- Paul is saying that when James, Peter, and John perceived the authenticity and validity of Paul’s message and ministry, they entered into a ministerial agreement or partnership with him.
- Paul and Barnabas would go unto the “heathen” with the Gospel of the Uncircumcision and the twelve would limit their ministry to Israel only.
- Just what did this agreement mean that Paul was to go to the “heathen” and Peter, James, and John to the circumcision? After this agreement, Paul continued to go to the Jews wherever he found a synagogue.
  - Acts 17:2
  - Romans 1:16

- Paul’s whole dispensational program was based on joining the uncircumcision and circumcision people into one joint body (Ephesians 2:13-18). How could he do this if he did not evangelize the Jews?
- Charles F. Baker offers the following explanation in his book *Understanding Galatians And The Law*, “The explanation has been made that when God set Israel aside (Romans 11:12, 15), Israel ceased to be the chosen nation and became just another one of the nations so that Paul was abiding by this agreement by going to the nations since Israel was not just one among the nations.” (Baker, 32)
- What about the Jewish Apostles then? The simple explanation of this agreement is that the Jewish apostles would continue their ministry in Judea with the Little Flock, while Paul would carry the gospel to the uncircumcised nations, which included the unbelieving Jews i.e., non-Little Flock members of the dispersion.
- Simply stated, Peter, James, and John agree to limit their ministry to those who were members of the Little Flock through faith in their preaching. While Paul would go to the rest of humanity, which now included all of Israel that had not submitted to the preaching of the Gospel of Circumcision.

### **Galatians 2:10**

- **Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.**
- Thus far, the only thing James, Peter, and John had done was recognize and acknowledge that the Lord had given Paul his apostleship to the Gentiles. There had been no contribution whatsoever to his message or gospel!
- Before parting, they suggest to Paul that he remember the needs of the poor, which might have been a contribution if it were not for the fact that he had already been doing this.
  - Acts 2:44-45—why are there poor saints in Jerusalem? They had sold all their houses and lands in compliance with the teaching of the Apostles.
  - Acts 5:1-4
  - Acts 11:27-30—Paul had already been involved in the famine relief effort.
  - Romans 15:26—Paul kept his word to see to the needs of the poor members of the Little Flock by taking up a collection from the Gentile churches he established.
    - II Corinthians 8 & 9
- Galatians 2:1-10—provide Paul’s inspired perspective on what transpired at the Jerusalem Council meeting in Acts 15.
- Acts 15:1-35—Luke provides the perspective of the Little Flock. These are not contrary to each other but rather need to be put together so as to get a full and complete picture of what transpired.

- Acts 15:18-35—James offers his “sentence” on the events of the Council. Pastor C.R. Stam’s offers some helpful and instructive insights on this passage in his commentary series *Acts Dispensational Considered*:
  - “After James had finished speaking the decision was made final as "the apostles and elders with the whole church" agreed to convey it to the Gentile believers. This now had to be done in a way that would leave no question as to its authenticity or finality. They would send a committee of men chosen from their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, bearing a written notice of the decision, which they together could vouch for by word of mouth. This committee was composed of Judas Barsabas, perhaps related to Joseph Barsabas (Acts 1:23) having the same surname, and Silas. Both were "chief men among the brethren" and their word would be respected.

The communication was addressed specifically to the Gentile brethren "in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia" (Ver. 23). This is doubtless because the question about circumcision and the law had spread to the regions bordering Antioch, where Paul had labored, probably before and possibly during<sup>92</sup> his year's stay at Antioch (Acts 11:25,26 cf. Gal. 1:21,22).

The written decision of the council was in itself a great victory both for the Gentile believers and for Paul. Opening with a hearty "greeting"<sup>93</sup> from "the apostles and elders and brethren" at Jerusalem, it explained that they had heard that certain of their own number had gone to Antioch, troubling the Gentile believers there and "subverting"<sup>94</sup> their souls, and assured them that these men had received no command from them to go. The word "such" has been incorrectly supplied in Ver. 24. The meaning is not that the church at Jerusalem had not commissioned them to say what they did, but that they had not commissioned them to go at all: "to whom we gave *no commandment*."

In comparison with these trouble-makers the letter went on to speak of "chosen men" sent with "our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" -- these "chosen men" sent to confirm their statements. This gracious testimony to the character of Barnabas and Paul clearly implied that their words should be accepted and their authority respected by the Gentiles.

As to the actual decision of the council, reduced to writing in this letter, several important details should be noted.

1. The Church at Jerusalem did not impose the law upon the Gentile believers.
2. They could not have done so anyway, because they had no jurisdiction over them, but the point is that had the kingdom program gone on the Gentiles would have been subject to Israel. Now the Church at Jerusalem makes it clear that this is not the case.
3. The "necessary things" in which the Jerusalem Church did exhort them, were not works of the law which they sought to bind upon the Gentiles after all, but things which they felt the Gentile believers should "abstain" from so as not to shock the prejudices of the Jews with whom they came into contact (Ver. 29).

4. Even these details were not put in the form of commands. It was simply suggested that they would "do well" to abstain from these things for the time being (Ver. 29) even if this proved somewhat of a "burden." We do not believe, as some do, that Paul agreed to subject the Gentiles to certain legal requirements and then later repudiated the agreement (See Gal. 2:5; 5:1,3,9).

Because of the transition from the kingdom program to that of the present economy the council's written decision was necessary both to establish Gentile liberty and to confirm Paul's apostolic authority among the Gentiles. It did not, however, supersede Paul's own God-given authority and commission. He needed no Jerusalem council to endorse his apostleship. Thus while he accepted its decision as a satisfactory settlement of the matter in question, he never once refers to this letter in his epistles, not even when discussing the principal matter with which it dealt (Gal. 2). Anyway, Paul found higher reasons why the Gentiles- and even the Jews--should not be under the law (Rom. 7:2; Gal. 3:13; Col. 2:14) and higher motives for abstaining from anything that might in any way injure others, whether lost or saved (Rom. 14:13-15; I Cor. 8:1,4,7,9; 10:28-33; Gal. 5:13). Indeed, even where impurity and immorality were concerned he found greater motives for true sanctification in the truths that they were "bought with a price" and that their bodies were the members of Christ and the temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:15, 19, 20)." (Stam, 278-282)

- As stated by Pastor Stam, Paul never in any of his epistles references the four "necessary" things of Acts 15:28-29 as things that members of the body Christ must adhere to. In fact in I Corinthians 10 Paul permits the eating of meat sacrificed to idols under certain circumstances. It is also instructive that Paul never mentions James' letter or the four "necessary" in the book of Galatians when he writes to the churches of Galatia.
- Galatians 2:7-10—therefore, nothing was added to Paul's gospel by those who were apostles before him. This historical evidence supports Paul's statement in Galatians Chapter 1 that the gospel he preached was not after man.

#### **Works Cited**

Baker, Charles F. *Understanding Galatians and the Law*. Grand Rapids, MI: Grace Publications, 1992.

Stam, C.R. *Acts Dispensationally Considered, Volume II*. Chicago, IL: Berean Bible Society, 1955.